

# BROUGHTON HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Broughton Tolbooth 1582–1829

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## **Colinton Tunnel and other projects Chris Rutterford: 8 September 2025**

This talk was the one postponed from May, when the speaker, mural artist Chris Rutterford, realised that he wouldn't be able to get to Edinburgh from the Outer Hebrides, where he was working on another mural project. Luckily we were able to secure David Mackenzie from Glasgow at the last minute to fill the unexpected gap, to much appreciation by the members present.

However, Chris's talk was well worth waiting for as he amazed us with his wide range of projects involving murals past, present and future. Chris, who is from Colinton, studied at art college and initially decided to become an illustrator. Although he worked for different titles and magazines, he soon discovered that it was hard to make a living, so he gave up for a while, doing odd jobs, until he started creating murals.

He showed us many slides of his work, starting with two of his illustrated cows (right), which had popped up in various Edinburgh locations. Before his work in the Colinton tunnel, which many of us have seen, he started with a mural, which he loosely titled 'The Jacobite Stramash', which was done in 2010 and he showcased the way he has constructed many of his murals since. He took photos of willing volunteers to get portraits to include in the scenes, many of which he made up, but he said each person 'earned their place' in the painting.



Later on he was asked by a pub in Glasgow, the Bristol Bar, frequented by Rangers supporters, to paint the walls there. He used images of Ibrox but decided not to use his original plan, which included scenes from the Battle of Stirling, because it would have had images of dead Englishmen and he wanted it to be about community.

He was then asked to do a mural with scenes from Burns's Tam O'Shanter. It was about 80m long and most of the witches and warlocks were locals. This was shown at the Robert Burns museum in Alloway. For a later mural at The Tron on Edinburgh's High Street, the traditional venue for Hogmanay, he used 800 portraits of local people but lots more were not able to be incorporated.

For the Battle of Bannockburn he created a 24 m long mural involving children, which was displayed at the Bannockburn museum. This was to provide another common element to his mural work. So, when he was invited to fill the whole of the 140 m long Colinton (former railway) tunnel, now part of the Water of Leith walkway, he found that this was a bit of a challenge. Not only had he been unaware of its existence, he soon realised that the tunnel had sodium lamps which gave the wrong sort of light, so they were changed to something more neutral. There was also water running down the sides of the tunnel, so many of the panels had to be painted off site on boards or cut-out sections and later fixed on frames away from the wall itself.

The painted scenes related to Robert Louis Stevenson's poem 'From a Railway Carriage', from which he was able to draw up a complete sketch which was largely the format of the finished mural. He worked with about 700 children through local schools, particularly Colinton Primary, to produce the panels which were added to his mural work later. He also used street artists, expert at high quality graffiti, for sections of one of the walls, and between them they included all the words of the poem with images. Chris acted as a buffer between these artists and the organising committee who had raised the funding and might have been wary of less orthodox artists.

During lockdown he produced a mural for Reading Football Club and then Mackays pub on the Royal Mile. next and bigger tunnel project was



at Alloway, where 2,500 children from different schools were involved. Despite the range of panels painted by the kids in local schools, the overall effect was that their sections, which were fitted in the upper reaches of the tunnel, blended into the lower sections done by adults. There were the same problems with water ingress, dealt with in a similar manner to the Colinton tunnel, but he now realises that there needs to be some kind of protective barrier to prevent spray from passing bikes damaging the artwork.

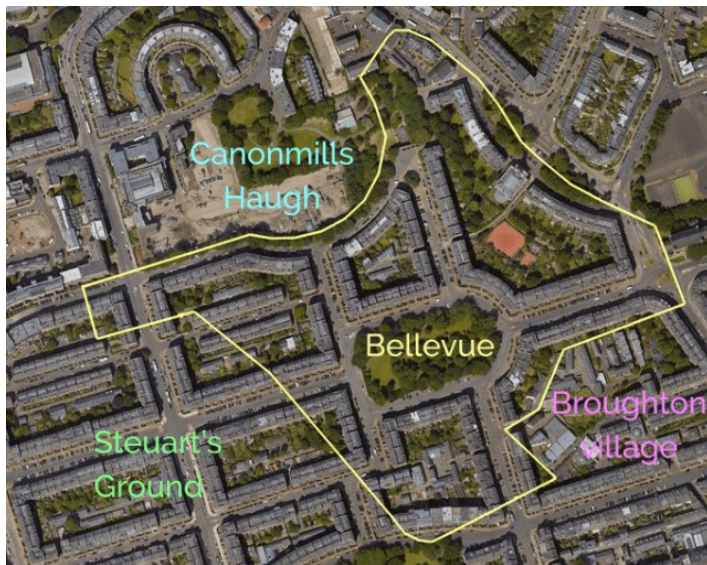
More recently, he has partially completed other murals in Colinton, incorporating local people undertaking traditional activities common to the village in Victorian times, and he hopes this will eventually 'link up' with the existing tunnel mural via Spylaw Park. Currently he has an active mural project on Lewis and another in Glasgow, so seems to be permanently juggling his time to good effect.

After several interesting questions from the audience, he had to pack up and drive back to Strathyre, north of Callander, although we had not realised that's where he's currently based. This well-illustrated talk was much appreciated as was the new sound system, which had its first outing too.

**Richard Love**



## Bellevue & Boundaries or How the Second New Town got its shape: Andy Arthur October 6 2025



Our October talk was given by Andy Arthur, local historian and creator of the excellent Edinburgh History site Threadinburgh. If readers are not familiar with this site it is highly recommended to them.

The essential question is how did the current pattern of streets, that we all recognise shown left, come to be? In the beginning it was all fields. Then in 1755 George Drummond, the many-times Lord Provost of Edinburgh and the main driving force behind the New Town

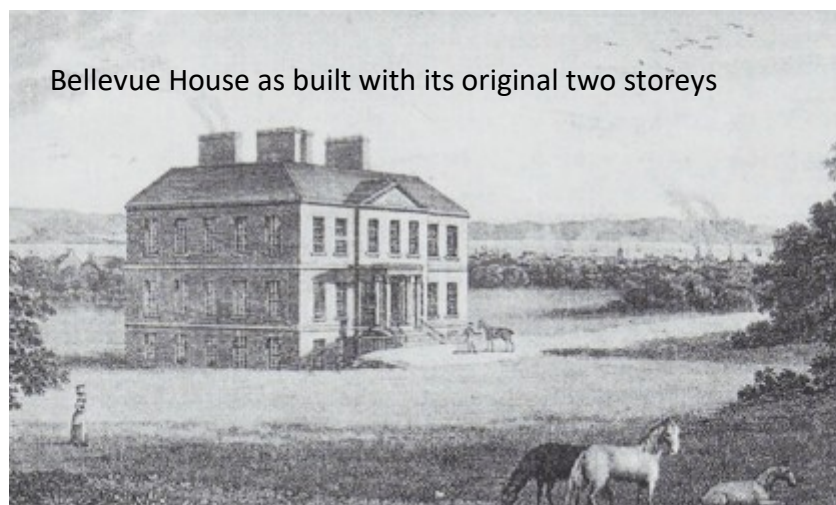
development amongst many other projects bought a house and land around Old Broughton Village. He did not build the house but renamed it after himself as Drummond Lodge, then a "country retreat". The city of Edinburgh would have been invisible behind the ridge of what is now George Street. We don't know what it looked like but from plans we can see it faced north, with views across the Forth, and the parkland and gardens were renowned.

Drummond died in 1766, and the estate was sold to Major General John Scott of Balcomie and Scotstarvit (in Fife), a rich soldier, politician and accomplished gambler. In about 1774, while gambling with the also very rich, but obviously less crafty gambler, Sir Lawrence Dundas, Scott won Dundas' brand new house in 36 St. Andrew Square, better known as the Head Office of the Royal Bank of Scotland. (The tradition is that the gaming took place in that house).

However Scott allowed Dundas to keep his house on condition that he paid for a bigger and better house for Scott.

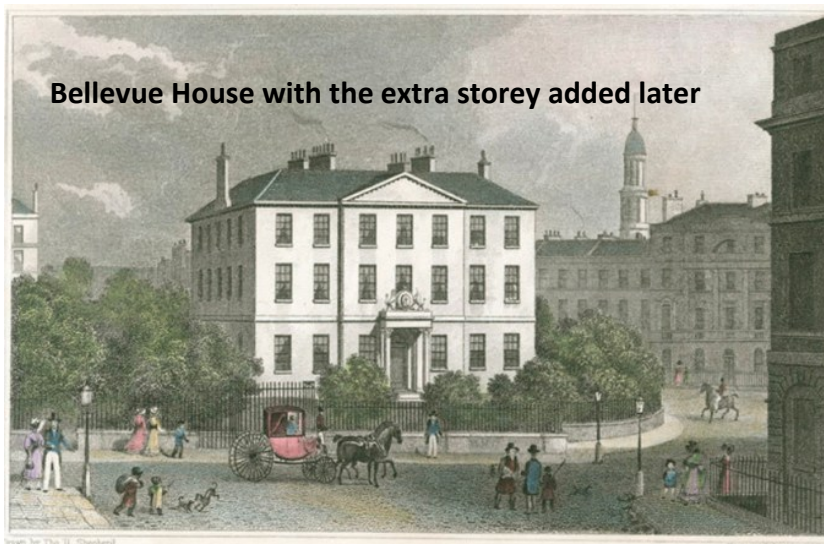
The architect was Robert Adam. It was called Bellevue House, after the Château de Bellevue, built in 1750 for Madam de Pompadour by Louis XV. Scott died in 1775, before the house was complete. One of his

daughters inherited and married the Marquess of Tichfield in 1795. It was then sold to the City Council in 1800. They didn't want the house, it was the land holding built up by Drummond that they were after. Another significant landowner was David Steuart (1747-



1824), another former Lord Provost. He purchased part of Queen Street Gardens in front of his house from Heriot's (the other significant local landholder) His actions forced Heriot's hand and eventually (in 1800) the council bought Bellevue with Steuart bankrupted. The Council then had the Estate cleared for development with a condition that any scheme should retain Bellevue House.

This scheme, with a few amendments which were needed, is what we have today. One of these is that Abercromby Place was made a symmetrical crescent, with Nelson Street offset as a compromise, to maintain symmetry of other blocks. Bellevue was turned into a Crescent following the existing land boundary.



Drummond Place's form changed, with Bellevue house at its east looking up Dublin Street.

The final plan cleverly made use of an irregular plot in a very systematic manner - compromises and constrictions made to look intentional. There are places where it is penned in by plots which are not part of the scheme. This explains the irregular shape of East Queen Street

Gardens, where the pre-existing Gabriel's Road ran. A protracted building process went on into 1820s and was not actually fully completed until the north end of Bellevue Crescent in the 1880s!

The house became an awkward centrepiece to Drummond Place, slightly offset and with no parkland. The city therefore leased it in 1802 to the Board of Customs, after adding another storey to meet their requirements. However functions continued to drain south to London, and by the 1830s, 17 rooms were vacant. The city had been keen to reacquire it as a Mansion for the Lord Provost.

However, in 1843 the Edinburgh, Leith & Newhaven Railway begin to construct Scotland Street Tunnel. A complex deal was done whereby the Customs moved to Picardy Place, the City sold the house to the Railway Company for £3,200, who then demolished it (re-using masonry around Scotland Street Station, saving them £1,200). The proprietors of Drummond Place bought the cleared plot for £1,200 and set up their pleasure gardens. In February 1846, the Edinburgh Evening Post reported "*in a few days it will be levelled with the ground*" and that its removal would be "*a great improvement to Drummond Place, besides opening up the vistas from Duke (Dublin) Street northward and London Street eastward*"

And they all lived happily ever after. Until someone painted their door pink.

Members enjoyed Andy's lively presentation very much and although most of us will have known some of the content of the talk I suspect we all learned something new.

**Jim Eunson**